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UNIFIED EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF DOMINANT MANEUVER ON THE JOINT
BATTLEFIELD

by

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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.


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| 15. Abstract: The battlefield of the 21st century will be deeper, demand more responsive operations, and will be influenced by new technology. To be successful on this battlefield, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision 2010 envisions a need for dominant maneuver by joint and combined forces. The problem that US Joint Force Commanders face is the need to develop methods of command and control which "manage the seams" of the battlefield exposed during maneuver. This paper explores the current thinking and practice on dealing with the seams and proposes an alternative concept of Liaison for seams management at the operational level. Using Operation Uphold Democracy as an example, the paper presents a concrete example of how the "Liaison Concept" provided for dominant maneuver in the plan for the invasion of Haiti. | | | |
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In September of 1994, as part of Operation Uphold Democracy, US forces prepared to conduct forcible entry combat operations in the small Caribbean nation of Haiti. After planning and testing a number of options, USACOM settled on a concept which would involve: the seizure of targets in Port-a-Prince by airborne elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and by helicopterborne elements of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF...operating principally from the USS America); seizure of targets in the Cap Haitian area by Marines of the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) operating from US Navy Amphibious shipping; combat support operations by 300 plus aircraft under the command of a airborne Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC); and post H-hour peace enforcement operations by the 10th Mountain Division . At H-Hour on D-Day, four commands (82nd ABnDiv, JSOTF, SPMAGTF, and JFACC) would be employing combat forces in an area no larger than New Jersey. Yet unlike a similar operation in Grenada over 10 years earlier, this operation had all of the trappings for being successful; it was commanded and controlled by a single Joint Task Force Commander (XVIII Airborne Corps), utilized newly forged joint doctrine to employ forces from all four services and the US Special Operations Command, and planned to utilize operational maneuver to shatter the enemy's cohesion through unexpected actions.¹ Since the combat operations were never executed as planned, it is difficult to pronounce this operation a success in joint combat warfare. However, it can be utilized as a model in examining joint doctrine and to specifically observe command, control and maneuver from the operational level.

The Commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps, as CJTF Uphold Democracy, maintained firm overall operational command. Although the Joint Task Force headquarters was an adhoc organization built around the Corps headquarters (with limited participation from the other services until shortly prior to execution) it, none the less,

¹U. S. Marine Corps, Warfighting, FMFM 1 (Washington: 1989), 59.

qualified as a joint command element. The chain of command was well defined and the joint force organization was within the guidelines of joint doctrine. Maneuver was the planned method for getting a variety of forces deep into the enemy's defenses in order to break up his cohesion and force quick capitulation of the Haitian forces. Because movement of forces would be rapid and widely dispersed, control was, by necessity, decentralized. While the JTF commander was aboard the USS Mount Whitney exercising overall command, he was not in a position to function as the on-scene commander. Consequently, at H-Hour on D-Day, the following C2 would have existed in the AOR.

- The JFACC would be airborne over Haiti exercising command and control over fixed wing aviation but not over rotary wing aviation.
- The JSOTF on the USS America would exercise command and control over his forces and rotary wing aviation from an airborne platform and had a back-up EC-135 in the air over Haiti as a alternate C3 cell.
- The Commander of the 82nd Airborne would exercise command and control over his forces and aviation assets through the commanders inserting with the force.
- The Marines near Cap Haitian would be under the command of the MAGTF commander and under the control of the on-scene Ground Combat Element (GCE) commander.
- The XVIII Airborne Corps would have a jump command post insert at H-Hour, but they would exercise little influence over actions until some time after the initial assault.
- The XVIII Airborne Corps also planned to have a EC-135 in the air over Haiti to act as a deconfliction C3 command element (however their primary mission, due to limited communication nets, was to monitor and in exigent situations deconflict).

With four different element commanders controlling their forces in the air and on the ground at H-Hour on D-Day, the plan for coordination and control along the "seams" of the battlefield involved the intricate use of synchronization measures. Obviously these synchronization measures needed to be coordinated. However, with no designated on-scene commander, one miscue or mistake in the pre-planned flow of forces and fire support clearly had the potential to be fatal. Everything seemed to depend upon precise execution to prevent fratricide and to accomplish the XVIII Airborne commander's intent.

PROBLEM

While the CJTF was organizing, planning, and preparing to fight his forces in accordance with current joint doctrine and attempting to achieve a "seamless" unity of effort, his operational concepts for command, control and maneuver appeared to be on a collision course.

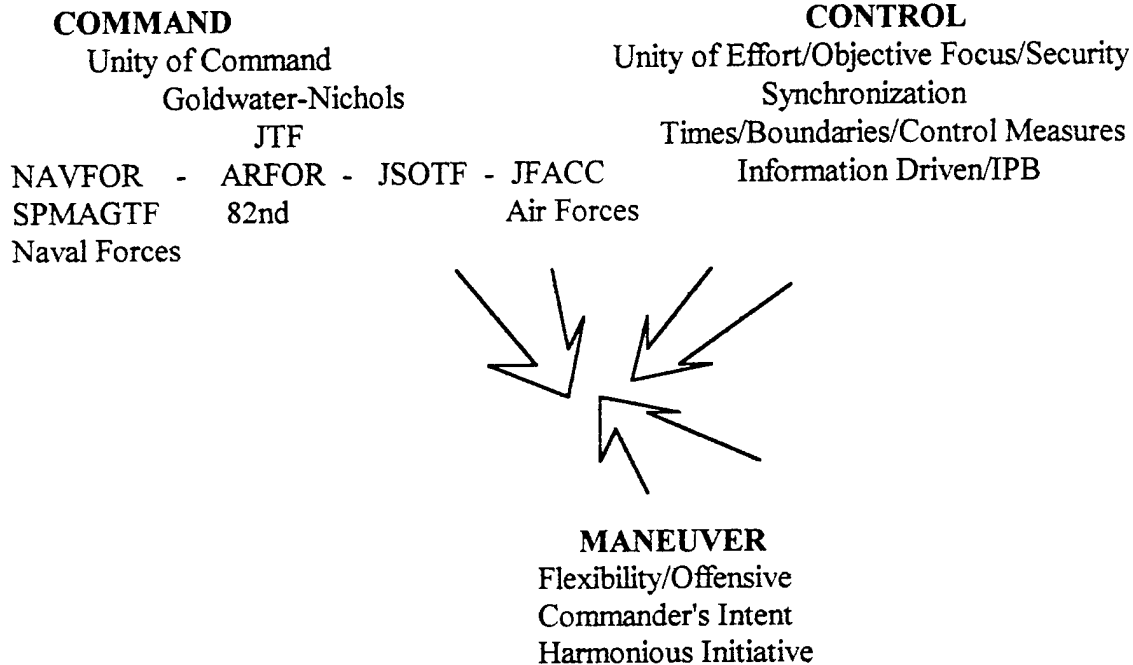


Figure 1

All three of the operational concepts discussed in *Figure 1* are firmly established in joint doctrine and are essential to successful combat operations. However, based upon the situation identified in Uphold Democracy, it is apparent we either have an inadequate organization for combat, a misunderstanding of the concepts and terms of command/control/maneuver, or there is some other method necessary to achieve harmony between the three concepts. I believe that as we seek the answer to this problem, we will find that it lies **not** with our organization for combat **nor** with our terms or doctrine, but with the method of achieving the often misunderstood and overlooked concept of "harmonious initiative." This essay will attempt to analyze command, control, maneuver,

and harmonious initiative and present an operational concept which enables integration of the four terms.

HISTORY

One of the results of Desert One (The Holloway Commission) and Grenada, was the changes made to US law concerning the organization and employment of US forces. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was Congress' attempt to "fix" the problems identified by these operations. Specifically, they were attempting to strengthen the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, streamline the warfighting authority within the CINCs, and remove the Service parochialism and rivalry from the battlefield. Congress' intent in the Goldwater-Nichols Act was clearly articulated by Senator Sam Nunn:

These changes are designed to correct problems that have been evident in the Department of Defense for many years. These problems include lack of interservice cooperation, poor quality of collective advice from the Joint Chiefs, cumbersome chains of command, inadequate authority of the war-fighting commanders in the field and excessive bureaucracy at every level.²

Clearly, the single greatest problem that the Goldwater-Nichols Act was trying to address was the lack of unity of command. Responding to the military history of the post World War II period, Congress was attempting to force unified effort among the separate Services and correct the problem which led to combat inefficiency, and in at least one case, combat failure. While the efforts of Congress to mandate "jointness" were admirable, the success of the Goldwater-Nichols Act has been mixed. While it has strengthened the Chairman and Joint Staff and resulted in the development of joint doctrine, it has created more CINCs, more components within the Combatant Commands (i. e. Special Operations Component Commander/JSOTF) and, as a result, increased the

²Mark T. Seeley, Thesis: The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Act of 1986: Genesis and Postscript, (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 1987), 52.

potential "seams" on the battlefield. In essence, the legislation fixed many problems but in the process created more complexity for the warfighter.

Prior to Goldwater-Nichols, the Services each had their own method for dealing with the seams and coordination necessary for unity of effort: the Army had its Air-Land Battle, the Navy had Composite Warfare and the Marine Corps had Amphibious Doctrine. All were designed to ensure efficient command and control, unity of effort, and maximum combat power at the point of main effort. Problems ensued however, when multiple Service forces had to operate together on the same battlefield. Clearly, unified command, doctrine, and unity of effort was necessary for the emerging joint battlefield of the late 20th century. The issue was how to achieve this unity of effort during joint operations. This is the question that the Combatant Commanders and other Joint Force Commanders had to answer.

REORGANIZE

The principle approach, as modified and utilized in Desert Storm, was to organize and fight by Component Commands. This method created at least six organizations (Army Forces, Marine Forces ashore, Coalition Forces, Air Forces, Special Operations Forces, and Naval Forces afloat) with multiple seams on the battlefield. While this method was effective for Desert Shield, General Merrill McPeak in his testimony to Congress on Roles and Missions, recommended a new concept for the battlefield of the 21st century. He envisioned reorganizing forces along three functional lines with a reduced number of seams and establishment of firm centralized control. His presentation specifically recommended:

- Reduce seams to the lowest practical number. The fewer seams the better.
- A reasonably competent opponent attacks seams. Have strong seams.
- Seams management ("integration," "coordination," "interface") should be the responsibility of commanders who have full authority over all the organizational entities operating on both sides of the specified boundaries.³

³U. S. Air Force, General Merrill A. McPeak: Presentation of the Commission on Roles

He further recommended:

The *Close Battle* should be fought by ground forces (including organic aviation and air defense) under the command of a Joint Forces Land Component Commander (JFLCC), either USA or USMC, depending on who supplies the preponderance of forces.

The *Deep Battle* should be fought by air forces under command of a Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC), either USAF or USN, depending on who provides key force elements and has appropriate C3I.

The *High Battle* should be fought by air and naval forces under the command of a Joint Forces Air Defense Commander (JFADC), whether USAF or USN, depending on the scenario. Normally, the JFACC is dual-hatted as the JFADC.⁴

General John H. Cushman, USA (Retired) in his article "Make it Joint Force XXI", takes an even more radical force consolidation approach. General Cushman states:

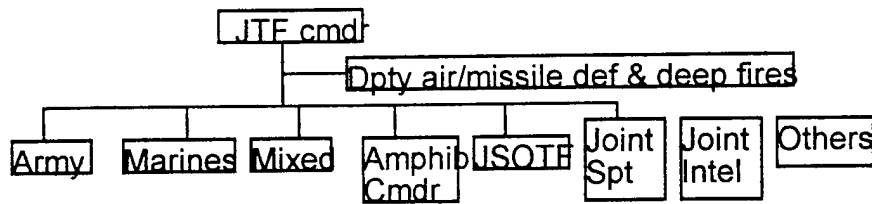
While this command structure (Component Commands) suffices for personnel management and administration, to fight using these component commanders as operational commanders alone simply will not work. For fighting, the forces must be mixed in a task organization that is designed for the specific mission and situation.⁵

In support of enhancement for the purpose of conducting maneuver warfare, he proposes a command organization which has five or more maneuver formations, the JFACC/JFADC consolidated under one commander for air/missile defense and deep fires, joint/unified communications, and joint logistics and intelligence supporting commands (see *Figure 2*).

and *Missions of the Armed Forces*, (Washington: 1994), 23.

⁴Ibid., 39.

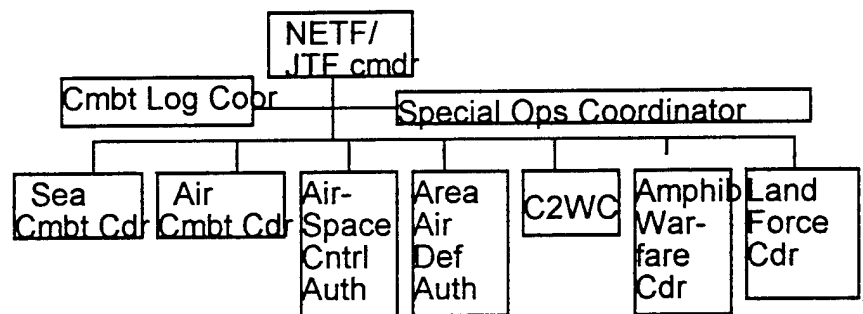
⁵Lieutenant General John H. Cushman, "Make it Joint Force XXI", *Military Review*, March-April 1995, 5.



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Figure 2

The Navy, on the other hand, in their draft document on Integrated Battle Order, creates a Naval Expeditionary Task Force (whose commander could function as a Joint Force Commander) that has seven subordinate commanders and two commander/coordinators as illustrated in *Figure 3*.



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Figure 3

It is clear that there are a multitude of concepts on how to organize the joint force for combat. While many may take exception with some of the concepts presented above, the authority to effect such reorganization of combat forces is clearly articulated in both federal law and in joint doctrine. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 provides that a Combatant Commander has authority for "prescribing the chain of command to the commands and forces within the command....organizing commands and forces within that command as he considers necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command."⁸

⁶Ibid., 8.

⁷U. S. Navy, Concept for Integrated Naval Component Battle Organizations - Draft, Naval Doctrine Command Report (Norfolk, Va: 1995), 3-2-2.

⁸U. S. Laws, "Goldwater-Nichols Act," United States Statutes at Large, Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress, 2d sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 100 STAT 1014.

Joint Publication 0-2 further specifies that "JFCs have the authority to organize forces to best accomplish the assigned mission," that "Service forces may be assigned or attached to subordinate joint forces without the formal creation of a Service component of the joint force," and "the JFC can establish functional component commands to conduct operations (joint force land, air, maritime, and special operations component commanders are examples of functional components)".⁹ The three restrictions specified by the joint doctrine are that a functional component's staff which employs forces of more than one Service must be joint, the MAGTF commander will retain operational control of organic air assets, and "JFCs **should** allow Service tactical and operational assets and groupings to function generally as they were designed."¹⁰

Clearly, there is a great deal of latitude given to a Joint Force Commander to reorganize the forces within a Joint Task Force. We can expect, as the US military becomes smaller and more specialized, that we will see more and more creative ways of organizing the joint force. However, it is also clear that many of these reorganizations **do not** simplify command but actually create **more** seams on the battlefield. If reorganization does not necessarily create unity of effort and reduce the seams/battlefield friction, then what other tool does the Joint Force Commander have to achieve harmony of his forces?

CENTRALIZED CONTROL

Many commanders turn to the concept of control to achieve unity of effort on the battlefield. Anyone who has served in the US military for any period of time recognizes the importance of control. Control is the glue which holds combat organizations together and "allows commanders freedom to operate, delegate authority, place themselves in the best position to lead, and synchronize actions throughout the operational area."¹¹ A

⁹Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 0-2: Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF), (Washington: 1995), xiv, IV-3, and IV-4

¹⁰Ibid., IV-4.

¹¹Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0: Doctrine for Joint Operations, (Washington: 1995), II-17.

major function of the Joint Force Commander is to ensure the proper execution of the synchronization of forces plan. By doing so, he ensures that his intent or concept of operations is achieved, fratricide or friendly fire incidents are reduced, and the seams of the battlefield are protected. But is there a cost to be paid by too much synchronization or too much control? Captain Robert Muise, in discussing synchronization, states:

The Army manuals describe it as "arranging activities in space to mass at the decisive point." To achieve the appropriate timing, all players must be operating from the same sheet of music. The concept of synchronization elicits the image of an orchestra, all elements of which must operate from the same score at precisely the same instant. To achieve the desired results, a central coordinator - the conductor - must ensure strict adherence to the score. The armed services are not in the business of playing concerts, but the music analogy is valid. In Operation Desert Storm, for example, the main effort - the Army's VII Corps - did not achieve decisive results. In his article, "Pushing Them Out the Back Door," Colonel James G. Burton, U. S. Air Force (Retired), links the VII Corps failure to their incessant quest for synchronization. Colonel Burton states, "Clearly, Frank's (Lieutenant General Frederick M. Franks, Jr., commanding officer of the VII Corps) failure to cut off the Republican Guard's escape can be traced to his strict adherence to the synchronization element of the Army's new doctrine."¹²

While it is true that there were other factors which facilitated the escape of the Republican Guards, it is also correct to say that reliance on strict synchronization and control slowed the advance of the VII Corps and impacted the achievement of the much publicized requirement to destroy the Republican Guards.¹³

While control certainly may "glue" the force together and ensure management of the battlefield seams problem, it also may degrade the combat power of the force by depriving it of surprise, flexibility, and the ability to conduct effective maneuver. It appears, as

¹²Captain Robert J. Muise, "Cleansing Maneuver Warfare Doctrine", U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings, November 1994, 48.

¹³Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, The General's War, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 146.

stated earlier, when operational maneuver is utilized, there is a great deal of friction which can not be resolved by simply reorganizing the force or exercising stricter control.

WHAT IS MANEUVER ?

Maneuver warfare is defined as operations which seek to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a series of rapid, violent, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which he can not cope.¹⁴ Maneuver is achieved by the use of decentralized control, mission orders and directives, and a well communicated commanders intent and end state.

Decentralized control, by definition, takes the control of forces on the battlefield and places it in the hands of the maneuver elements within an operational command. It does not mean however, that the operational commander relinquishes all responsibility for his subordinate elements. While the object is to have subordinate commanders make decisions on their own initiative, they must also keep the operational commander situationally aware of changes on the battlefield. The key is that the operational commander does not use his situational awareness of the battle to stifle the initiative of his subordinates.

The second method for achieving maneuver is to utilize mission orders. This is the art of assigning a subordinate a mission without specifying in excruciating detail how the mission must be accomplished. From the operational commanders perspective the operational concept must plan for movement of forces and attack of objectives by use of maneuver. Orders to subordinates to support this concept must be specific enough to accomplish the objective and ensure coordination between friendly forces but general enough to allow the subordinate to take advantage of the constantly changing situation on the battlefield.

¹⁴U. S. Marine Corps, Warfighting, 59.

The third way of enhancing maneuver is to articulate a clear statement of the commander's intent. The intent is a vision which conveys what the commander wants to do to the enemy. It is the desired end state on the battlefield. What the commander wants the enemy to look like when the mission is accomplished. It should not be confused with how the commander wants to accomplish his mission; that is contained in the concept of operations.

Captain Muise goes back to his music analogy for a description of how maneuver warfare works:

A proper understanding of the military concept (of maneuver) has been compared to a jazz improvisation session: where the whole band works to one broad harmonic framework or direction, but each individual player improvises upon it harmonically, melodically and rhythmically, introducing new shades of colour and new tensions and resolution to intensify - or relax - the sense of pace over the underlying progression. It is the adaptability of the individual initiative to emergent opportunities.¹⁵

It is easy to see that such an exercise of maneuver, while essential to combat success, will put pressure on the seams of a battlefield. Additionally, the more complex a command or the greater the disparity of military forces on the battlefield (typical of the operational level of war), the more likely we are to incur problems with the seams while executing maneuver. Consequently, with the requirement for maneuver established, and force reorganization and centralized control exposed as counterproductive to seams management, where does the commander turn for tools to ensure unity and focus on the battlefield? I believe we must examine the frequently overlooked concept of harmonious initiative and lateral communications.

HARMONIOUS INITIATIVE

Harmonious initiative is a term which would not appear to have a place in military

¹⁵Muise, 47-48.

jargon or warfighting doctrine. Harmony, as defined in the dictionary, is a pleasing combination of the elements that form a whole. Initiative is defined as action without prompting or direction from others.¹⁶ It appears that the two terms contradict one another. However, if we harken back to the example of the jazz session, we can get a sense of how harmonious initiative works. It is initiative that seeks to complement the end state of the group. It is accomplished through training, intuition, and practice. But, **most of all it requires communications between the musicians.** By their eyes, ears, and through the feel of the music, they communicate with one another and ensure a harmonious effort. Indirect and lateral communications/coordination between the musicians is the key to the success of the group as a whole. FMFM 1, the Marine Corps doctrine on warfighting, also recognizes this need for harmonious initiative and lateral coordination:

It is obvious that we cannot allow decentralized initiative without some means of providing unity, or focus, to the various efforts. To do so would be to dissipate our strength. We seek unity, not through imposed control, but through *harmonious initiative and lateral coordination.* ¹⁷

The key then, to achieving this harmonious initiative, is to have effective lateral coordination (or in the case of the operational commander, communications and coordination) between his subordinate maneuver elements. This is the "new glue" which helps us achieve unity of effort on the complex and technical battlefield of the 21st century without falling back on the old and worn-out methods of reorganizing the chain of command or centralizing control. But what constitutes lateral coordination and communications? Is it simply having electronic radio and telecommunications between adjacent commanders? A good example of why that is not adequate is demonstrated by

¹⁶The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982) 595 and 662.

¹⁷U. S. Marine Corps, Warfighting, 71.

the problems experienced by Admirals Kinkaid and Halsey during the Battle of Leyte Gulf during World War II.

Admiral Halsey was assigned by Admiral Nimitz to be a supporting commander to General MacArthur's South-West Pacific Command for the invasion of Leyte in the Philippine Islands. It was envisioned that Halsey's powerful Third Fleet would protect the Northern flank of Admiral Kinkaid's transports and light carriers operating in Leyte Gulf and the seas off of Samar Island. After what appeared to be destruction of the main Japanese surface group attempting to make its way through the Strait of San Bernadino in order to attack the US transports, Admiral Halsey became aware of a second Japanese Carrier Task Force proceeding south from the mainland of Japan. Liberally interpreting his orders from Admiral Nimitz, he fired off a message to Admiral Kinkaid of his intentions and proceeded north with his entire force to engage the Japanese Carrier Task Force. Kinkaid, unaware of Halsey's new task organization, believed that he had left behind a part of his force to guard against any return by the Japanese forces in the San Bernadino Strait. Both had communicated their orders and intent to each other but neither was adequately aware of the other's situation. Only by great fortune did Kinkaid avoid serious destruction of his force from the Japanese forces coming out of the San Bernadino Strait. Clearly, communications were not enough in this case. Both commanders needed someone who understood the other commander's intent, plan and intuitive way of doing business. This is the job of a liaison officer. An officer with the experience, maturity, and personal understanding of his commander who is assigned to an adjacent commander for the purpose of ensuring that the seams between the two commands are adequately managed. Had Halsey assigned such an officer to Kinkaid's staff, it is probable that the problem between the two commanders would never have occurred.

LIAISON: A CONCEPT

Liaison is a tool which has received little attention at either the tactical or operational level of war. The task of being a liaison officer for a command often falls to the least competent officer who has failed in all other assignments. On the other hand, a wise commander will recognize that a competent liaison officer greatly assists in seams management, harmony of effort with higher and adjacent commands, and enhances his ability to exercise the initiative necessary on the modern fluid battlefield. In addition to experienced and mature officers, liaison teams must include the best communications equipment and personnel available in order to ensure effective and continuous coordination across the seams of the battlefield. So critical is this type communication to the success of war at the operational level that it is essential that the "liaison channel" be dedicated and continuous. In other words, the communications officer must give as much priority to the liaison net as he does to the command net. Joint Publication 1 reinforces the importance of this concept:

Experience shows liaison is a particularly important part of command, control, communications, and computers in a joint force. Recalling Clausewitz' analogy of a military force as an intricate machine, ample liaison parties, properly manned and equipped, may be viewed as a lubricant that helps keep that machine working smoothly.¹⁸

It is certainly true that there are other methods that commanders may use to communicate with higher and adjacent commands. There is, of course, no substitute for face to face communication between commanders. Today that is available not only through meetings, but also through Video Teleconferences (VTC). However, these methods do not replace nor negate the need for the competent liaison officers/liaison teams.

¹⁸Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1: Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, (Washington: 1995), III-10.

The cost in manpower and equipment for this concept is not cheap. To dedicate a handful of mature and competent field grade officers and communications specialists to what is often non-Table of Organization (T/O) liaison teams, is a hard decision for the commander to make. However, if the proper personnel are assigned, trained and equipped for the job, the payoff to the commander can be the freedom to exercise harmonious initiative.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to return to the example of Uphold Democracy. What was the "glue" that ensured that the seams for the planned invasion of Haiti were managed and coordinated? The answer was an intricate and comprehensive network of highly skilled liaison teams provided by the JSOTF to the adjacent and higher headquarters. These teams were positioned at the CINC's headquarters, with the JTF commander, with adjacent commanders, at key shore installations, and in airborne C2 platforms. They became a two-way street for the flow of information and intent that quite often gets lost in the communications channels and centers or inappropriately filtered by layers of command. Their value can be demonstrated by the absence of a liaison cell in one location. There was, for a number of reasons, no liaison team from the JSOTF with the U. S. Marines in Cap Haitien. They were the one element left out of this information grape vine. Consequently, the Marines had to rely on message traffic and radio communications via several layers of command. What resulted was friction when Special Operations Forces (SOF) planned to operate near or in the area of the Marine forces. Additionally, while other commanders in the organization enjoyed the benefit of receiving near real-time orders and commander's intent from the JTF commander, the Marines relied (at least early on in the planning cycle) on message traffic filtered through the Naval Component Commander. If the plan had been executed as planned, this is the one seam which could have potentially provided problems due to a lack of liaison/coordination.

Liaison is clearly the glue for management of the seams of the battlefield and effective coordination between higher and adjacent commands. It is the operational concept which harmonizes command, control, and maneuver. In the Chairman's Joint Vision 2010, the battlefield of the 21st century will become deeper, faster, and significantly influenced by new technology, and will require "new operational concepts -- **dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection, and focused logistics.**"¹⁹ In this type of dynamic environment, effective liaison will not only be necessary, but will become **critical** to combat success at the operational level.

¹⁹Joint Staff, "Joint Vision 2010 America's Military: Shaping the Future," Unpublished Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision Statement, Washington: 1995, 11.

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